

[Judge Starr's] integrity, and the committee has already endorsed his standing. . . . If Judge Starr makes a judgment, that is the judgment. That is it."

My colleagues on the other side didn't object or dispute that notion. For example, Senator JOHN KERRY, of Massachusetts, voiced the consensus opinion when he declared on the Senate floor that "Judge Starr is certainly a neutral party."

And, it didn't stop with the Democratic-chaired Ethics Committee and the Democrat-controlled Congress. In 1994, the U.S. District Court in the District of Columbia had to choose someone to serve as a special master to help enforce the Ethics Committee's subpoena for the Packwood diaries.

The court had to choose a man who was fair, impartial, prudent, and trustworthy; again, someone who wouldn't be on a vendetta against Democrats or Republicans; again, someone who had earned the clear respect of both parties, and someone with the highest integrity, who was above reproach.

The court chose such a man, Mr. President. It chose the former Solicitor General of the United States and a former judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals, Kenneth Starr.

So, today, we examine the White House's ludicrous, self-serving claim of a "vast right-wing conspiracy" and find that the conspiracy has ensnared even more than we would have ever imagined. The "vast right-wing conspiracy" can now count as members the Democrat-chaired Ethics Committee in 1993 and the then Democrat-controlled Senate. And, lest we forget, the conspiracy can also count the Federal District Court for the District of Columbia as one of its members.

My point here, Mr. President, is simple: The attacks on Kenneth Starr are unfounded and unproductive. The attacks are, in fact, unconscionable.

Let me point out, as far as this crazy conspiracy theory is concerned, most people would agree that the Senator from Kentucky has fairly solid conservative Republican credentials. If somebody were engineering a "vast right-wing conspiracy," I think I might have gotten wind of it. Furthermore, let me point out that I don't know Ken Starr. I do not recall ever meeting him in my 14 years in Washington. If he were a fire-breathing Republican ideologue, one would think that, as active in Republican politics as I have been over the last 15 years, I might have run into him someplace along the line.

The crisis in the White House is a crisis for our entire country. The crisis will only be resolved by a fair and sober search for the truth. It is clear from the record that Judge Starr is the right man for this job. I think that it is important for the President and his people to stop this smear campaign. Let Ken Starr do his court-appointed job and let the American people learn the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. KENNEDY addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

#### THE DEMOCRATIC AGENDA

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I strongly support the legislative priorities announced today by President Clinton, Vice President GORE, Senator DASCHLE, and Congressman GEPHARDT.

These priorities contain a number of major Democratic initiatives to protect Social Security and to help working families across the country on key issues such as jobs, education, health care, and the environment. And I look forward to their enactment this year.

One of the pillars of our Democratic agenda is a commitment to raise the minimum wage by 50 cents in each of the next 2 years. Our proposal will increase the minimum wage from its current level of \$5.15 an hour to \$5.65 an hour on January 1, 1999, to \$6.15 an hour on January 1 in the year 2000. In 1996, after a hard-fought battle in the last Congress, we raised the minimum wage by comparable amounts with no adverse effects whatever on the economy. The scare tactics about lost jobs proved to be as false as they are self-serving.

A recent study by the Economic Policy Institute contains documents that the sky hasn't fallen as a result of the last increase. Raising the minimum wage does not cause job loss for teenagers, adults, men, women, African Americans, Latinos, or anyone else. Twelve million Americans benefited from raising the minimum wage, and they deserve the increase that we are proposing.

To have the purchasing power it had in 1989, the minimum wage today would have to be \$7.33 an hour. That figure is still well above the level that we are proposing. That fact is a measure of how far we have not just fallen short but actually fallen back in giving low-income workers their fair share of our extraordinary economic growth.

In the past 30 years, the stock market, adjusted for inflation, has gone up by over 100 percent while the purchasing power of the minimum wage has gone down by 30 percent. We know who these minimum wage workers are. Sixty-percent are women. Nearly three-quarters are adults. Half of those who would benefit work full time. Over 80 percent work at least 20 hours a week. They are teacher's aides, child care providers. They are single heads of households with children. They are people who clean office buildings in countless communities across the country working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year.

Minimum wage workers earn \$10,712 a year, \$2,600 below the poverty level for a family of three. Low-income workers don't just deserve a wage; they urgently need a raise. Nationwide, soup kitchens, food pantries, and homeless shelters are increasingly serving the

working poor—not just the unemployed.

In 1996, according to a recent U.S. Conference of Mayors study, 38 percent of those seeking emergency food aid held jobs, up from 23 percent in 1994. Low-paying jobs are now almost the most frequently cited cause of hunger. Officials in 77 percent of cities cited this factor.

The American people understand the unfairness of requiring working families to subsist on a subpoverty minimum wage.

I look forward to the early enactment of the increase we are proposing. Twelve million working Americans deserve a helping hand.

In good conscience we cannot continue to proclaim and celebrate the Nation's current prosperity while consigning millions who have jobs to live in continuing poverty. No one who works for a living should have to live in poverty in the United States of America.

The second pillar of the Democratic agenda is the Patient's Bill of Rights on health insurance.

Few issues are more important to all working families than quality, affordable health care. Every family needs and deserves good medical care when a loved one is ill. Every family that has faithfully paid its premiums to its insurance plan deserves to receive the benefits the plan has promised. The American family knows that this promise is broken too often because unscrupulous insurance companies put profit ahead of patients.

In movie theaters across the country today audiences erupt in spontaneous cheers when the character portrayed by actress Helen Hunt explodes in frustration over the callous treatment that she and her son received from her managed care plan. The movie "As Good As It Gets" has been nominated for major academy awards.

But managed care today isn't receiving any awards, and neither is Congress for our lack of needed action to end these flagrant abuses.

The problems are obvious. Insurance company accountants should not be allowed to practice medicine. It is time to guarantee women the right to see a gynecologist. No breast cancer patient should be forced by health insurance plans to have a drop-by mastectomy when hospital care is needed. No patients with a rare or dangerous disease should be denied the right to be treated by a specialist. No child's health or very life should be at risk because a parent feels forced to drive past the nearest emergency room to a more distant hospital that is the only hospital covered by the group plan. No doctor should be subjected to gag rules, financial incentives, or financial penalties to prohibit or discourage them from giving patients the best medical advice. Reasonable review procedures should be available to anyone denied coverage or treatment by their insurance plan. Patients with an incurable

illness should be allowed to participate in clinical trials of new therapies that offer the hope of improvement and cure.

The Republican leadership has told the special interests to "get off their butts and get out their wallets" to fight any legislation that puts the interests of working families ahead of the interests of unscrupulous insurers. But with the President and the congressional Democrats unified for reform, I am confident that we will prevail and that our Patient's Bill of Rights will be signed into law this year.

A second health issue that is critical to millions of families is access to health insurance for those too young for Medicare but too old for affordable private coverage.

Our Democratic agenda offers these families immediate health and hope. We propose to allow them to buy into Medicare at a price that is far more affordable than the private market offers, if it offers them any insurance at all.

Three million Americans between the ages of 55 and 65 have no health insurance. The consequences are often tragic. As a group they are in relatively poor health, and their health continues to deteriorate the longer they are uninsured. They have no protection against the cost of serious illness. They are often unable to afford the routine care that can prevent minor illnesses from turning into serious disabilities, or even becoming life threatening. The number of uninsured in this group is growing every day.

Between 1991 and 1995, the proportion of today's workers whose employers promise them benefits if they retire early dropped 12 percent. Barely a third now have such a promise. In recent years too many who have counted on employer commitment have found themselves with only a broken promise and their coverage canceled after they have already retired.

The plight of older workers who lose their jobs through layoffs or downsizing is equally grim. It is difficult to find a new job at 55 or 60, and it is even harder to find a job that comes with health insurance.

For these older Americans who are left out and left behind for no fault of their own after decades of hard work, Democrats are offering a helping hand. By allowing these workers to buy affordable coverage through Medicare, our Democratic proposal is a lifeline for millions of these Americans. It provides a bridge to help them through the years before full Medicare eligibility. It is a constructive step towards the day when every American of any age will finally be guaranteed the fundamental right to health care.

Our proposal places no additional burden on Medicare. It is fully paid for by premiums from the beneficiaries themselves and by savings from fraud and abuse.

Democrats will fight hard for this commonsense approach to helping

older workers and their families. And Congress should respond.

In addition, on education, President Clinton and the Democrats in Congress have also made it a top priority to see that America has the best public schools in the world. We intend to do all we can to see that we have reached that goal.

Successful schools need a qualified teacher in every classroom making sure that children get the individual attention they need. That is why another main pillar of the Democratic agenda is to provide 100,000 new teachers for America's public schools. The shortage has forced school districts to hire more than 50,000 uncertified teachers a year, or ask certified teachers to teach outside their area of expertise. One in four new teachers do not fully meet State certification requirements, and 12 percent of new hires have no teacher training at all.

In Massachusetts, 30 percent of teachers in high-poverty schools do not even have a minor degree in their field.

Our Democratic proposal will also encourage State efforts to reduce class size by providing additional teachers needed to fill the smaller classrooms.

Our proposal will also help schools meet their urgent needs for repair, renovation, modernization, and new construction.

Investing in schools is one of the best investments America could possibly make. For schools across America, help can't come a minute too soon, and our Democratic proposal provides it.

On key issues, such as the minimum wage, health care, and education, the Democratic priorities put working families first.

Our proposals are investments in a better life for all of our families and a better future for the country. Special interests will fight hard to keep these proposals from becoming law. But Democrats in Congress and the President will fight harder because we know that the American people are with us. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. LOTT addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

#### IRAQ

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I believe that Senator DASCHLE will join me on the floor shortly because he and I would like to, in effect, have a joint statement with regard to Iraq because we want the message to be unambiguous, very clear to America and to our allies around the world, and to Iraq about our attitude and what our intentions are with regard to this very important matter.

I just had a call from Senator JOHN WARNER, who is in Russia today along with Senator CARL LEVIN. They are escorting Secretary of Defense Bill Cohen. They have already been to six countries since they were in Germany. I believe perhaps even the Senator from Arizona, the Presiding Officer,

was there. They have gone throughout the Arab world, and now they are in Russia.

He tells me that he believes that when they return, Secretary Cohen and the two Senators will bring a great deal of helpful information to the Senate and to the American people about what they have heard in the Arab world and what they have heard from our allies in those areas' meetings. They believe that they will be able to answer some of the very important questions that Senators have been asking.

So we will look forward to their return.

I had hoped that we could get to the point where we could pass a resolution this week on Iraq. But we really developed some physical problems, if nothing else. Senator WARNER and Senator LEVIN would like very much to be a part of the discussion about what the situation will be and how we should proceed on Iraq. They would like to be here. And other Senators are necessarily not going to be able to be here beyond this afternoon.

So we have decided that the most important thing is not to move so quickly but to make sure that we have had all the right questions asked and answered and that we have available to us the latest information about what is expected or what is going to be happening with our allies in the world.

I was noting, I say to Senator DASCHLE, that I just talked to Senator WARNER in Russia, and he was telling me that Secretary Cohen and Senator WARNER and Senator LEVIN are looking forward to coming back and giving us a full report on their trip to the Arab world. Now they are in Russia today.

Mr. President, I have no doubt that the entire world is watching the current crisis between Iraq and the international community unfold. This is another showdown caused by Saddam Hussein.

The Iraqi dictator has decided that his weapons-of-mass-destruction program is more important than the welfare of his own people. At a time when we have been getting reports—in fact, we have seen children suffering from malnutrition—this dictator has been building \$1.5 billion in additional palaces. He has already endured 7 years of sanctions so that he can develop biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons—and the means to deliver them.

This is a very serious matter. For some time we—and I mean America and our allies—have been working to develop a resolution on Iraq that has broad bipartisan support and also one that would bring the situation under control there by diplomatic efforts hoping to avoid military action. But that has not happened yet.

I believe we are moving toward a consensus in the Senate on a number of the key issues that must be addressed as we look to the future. And here they are.

First of all, Saddam Hussein does pose a real threat to the region and to